



A GUIDE TO CATERING IN LUCAS COUNTY

The Toledo-Lucas County Health Department has established the following guidelines in conjunction with Ohio Revised Code Chapter 3717, for *currently licensed caterers and those pending licensure*.

- 1. Where can food be prepared?** All food provided for a catering event must be prepared in a licensed kitchen. Off-site food preparation (ex: BBQ or grilling) will require the caterer to obtain a Temporary Food License for that event from the Toledo-Lucas County Health Department. All regulations governing Temporary Food Service Operations must be adhered to.
- 2. How many meals can be served?** The headcount (total number of meals served) for each event will be limited by (1) cooler space (2) hot holding capability (3) food cooking and preparation space (4) dry storage space. A maximum headcount should be established by the catering facility after considering these limitations and used when booking catering events.
- 3. What is an appropriate catering vehicle?** All catered food must be transported in a covered vehicle. Open bed trucks are not allowed. The interior of the vehicle must be smooth, non-absorbent and easily cleanable. Carpet is not allowed. The vehicle will be required to be cleaned and sanitized after the transport of dirty containers, dishes, utensils or garbage. A catering vehicle should be dedicated to the transportation of food only. Also, there is to be NO SMOKING in a catering vehicle.
- 4. How is food to be properly transported?** All hot foods must be transported in commercial-grade, NSF (or equivalent) approved insulated containers and maintained at a temperature of 135°F or above. All insulated containers must be pre-warmed prior to placing hot foods so that temperatures will be maintained during transport. Hot foods **may not** be transported at room temperature. All cold foods must be transported on ice or in commercial-grade, NSF (or equivalent) approved insulated containers, and must maintain a temperature of 41°F or below. Cold foods **may not** be transported at room temperature. All transported food must be covered tightly and protected from contamination (i.e. melting ice). It is recommended that temperature logs be kept on all transported food items before leaving the catering facility and after arrival off-site. The logs should be maintained and held on file by the catering facility for each event for at least 90 days.
- 5. How much refrigeration space will be required?** Approval for a catering license requires, at a minimum, a walk-in cooler. Additional cooler space will be menu dependent. All cooling of hot foods must be conducted in a walk-in cooler. Limiting the amount of food that is to be prepared, cooled and reheated prior to the day of the event will help to maximize cooler space.

- 6. What are the set up requirements for each event?** Food offered in a self-service line must be protected from contamination by the use of sneeze guards or hinged lids. Hot foods that are not served immediately upon arrival must be held at 135°F or above by means of electric steam tables or chafers heated by the appropriate number of sternos. Cold foods and beverages (i.e. milk) that are not served immediately upon arrival must be held at 41°F or below on ice or under commercial-grade refrigeration. Proper hand washing, consisting of warm water, soap and disposable paper towels, must be made available for all persons serving food.
- 7. What are the restrictions for the service staff?** All employees preparing or cooking food must wear hair restraints (hat or hairnet). All ready-to-eat foods must be handled by utensils, deli paper or disposable gloves. There is to be no bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Watches and excessive jewelry are not permitted to be worn by food handlers. Jewelry must be limited to one plain wedding band. Artificial nails and fingernail polish are highly discouraged. Disposable gloves are required to be worn at all times by employees who wear artificial nails or nail polish.
- 8. Delivery verses catering.** Delivery differs from traditional catering in that (1) food is transported in disposable containers, no dishes or utensils are returned, (2) food is not set up or served to customers by employees of the caterer. Facilities who practice delivery only do not require a catering license. Licensed caterers who deliver as part of their business shall abide by the same transporting, holding and handling regulations as they would for a catering event. It is strongly recommended that all delivered food be labeled with Safe Handling Instructions in regards to proper holding or reheating temperatures. For example: “Serve Food Promptly and Refrigerate all Leftovers Without Delay” or “Reheat In Microwave to 165°F”.

**QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE TOLEDO-LUCAS COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT AT (419) 213-4100 EXT. 3**